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ROOTS OF THE KOREAN CONFLICT

LETTER FROM
GREAT BRITAIN
OF THE S.W.L.

A SUPPRESSED CHAPTER FROM THE
HISTORY OF AMERICAN TROTSKYISM
PART V BY

HUGO OEHLER

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ROOTS OF THE KOREAN CONFLICT

The war in Korea marks the imperialist invasion of a backward country. It is an attempt on the part of imperialism to drown the fires of the Asiatic revolution. It is an invasion by American imperialism (cloaked with the drapery of the UN) against the workers and peasants who are attempting to rid themselves of a feudal capitalism fostered by imperialism.

The war in Korea has marked a new stage in the struggle between American Imperialism and Stalinism; and can be a new stage between imperialism and the social revolution if proper lessons and a third independent position are taken by revolutionists. Korea marks the close of the postwar period, of capitalist reorganization and cold war. It represents the beginning of the pre-war struggle for military bases and raw materials in preparation for the all-out war against social revolutions and Stalinism. At the close of the previous world war, the fact that there were several great imperialist powers enabled the imperialists, a longer breathing spell before the next war. The balance of power among several imperialist blocs allowed more time and small wars were contained by the big powers for their jockeying for further advantages in the balance of power.

But at the close of the second world war the balance of power was something new; it was a balance only between the United States bloc vs. the Stalinist bloc. The tempo is faster and any shift here or there alters to a greater degree the delicate balance between these two forces. The loss of China gave Stalinism a weight in Asia that American imperialism cannot afford to burn further without a military challenge. That is what happened in Korea.

THE UNITED STATES HAS A WORLD PLAN

The United States came out of the last war with the key position in production distribution of commodities and the financial banker of the world with "unlimited" possibilities—if-if-the social revolutions can be smashed and if Stalinism is defeated. The weakness of the other powers as a result of the war forced them to follow the lead of Wall Street and Washington. In this fight the military experts of the United States can allow some fires to burn and cannot allow other fires to burn nor allow Stalinism to overstep given strategical points. For example, Greece is one of these points. The Near East is another such point. South East Asia is a third. Western Europe is another such defense line against social revolutions and Stalinism. In each one of these areas special measures suitable for the country and the needs of imperialism are being taken. Latin America and Africa have their own problems but these fires of revolt the Imperialists do not consider as dangerous as the fires around the Soviet Union. In other words Stalinism cannot EXPLOIT for their own bureaucratic needs and interests the social upheavals in the areas that American imperialism can get to quick with proper men and materials. But Stalinism can take advantage of social upheavals and revolutions within striking range of the Stalinist controlled Soviet Union and the surrounding nations, Korea is one such point.

American imperialism needs Japan, Formosa, and the Phillipine Islands as her outposts pointing at Asia for her master world plan against the social revolutions and Stalinism. If one of these points is breeched by

Stalinism or a social revolution the plan of American imperialism is weakened considerably. Korea serves as a military-political dagger and imperialist pressure point into Soviet Siberia and Manchuria. Also the American position in Japan, and the west Pacific Islands are endangered with Korea in the hands of Stalinism. That is the reason Truman declared war in fact, while trampling on the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of the United States.

The real sufferers of the war have been the Korean people. It is they who have been revolting against the conditions present in the post World War II period which gave 58% of the land to landlords who comprised but 3% of the population. It is they who revolted against the reactionary South Korean regime of Syngman Rhee who outlawed all working class political parties including the trade union movement except the Taecheon NO Chung, a company union. And their revolt will continue when even after the CP North Korean regime has established its rule taxes of from 30% to 72% have been levied. The same is about true of the South.

But the American people will have their share of suffering. Countless Americans and others will be and are being killed or crippled for Wall Street profits. Real wages will drop and prices and rents will go up with more taxes to pay for the war. Rents, interest, and profits will go up while housing for the masses will lessen. In the guise of a struggle against the American Stalinists the left radical movement will be pushed around while reaction will grow. American forms of the fascists will rear their ugly head. The trade union are already in retreat with the hammer blows from above through class unity in war.

In this case the American workers must do more than what Schachtman's group advocate. They advocate political opposition and work for socialism. Any social reformists can do the same as they always have in such cases. It is true that small organizations such as the "INDEPENDENT SOCIALISTS" can not do much more than propagate ideas. They are not integrated in the masses sufficiently to carry into action to any extent their position and the road necessary if and when slogans can be turned into action. Therefore, the situation calls for Lenin's line. The main enemy is at home, our own exploiters, and revolutionary Marxists must advocate the turning of the imperialist onslaught in Korea into a civil war here.

What is the position revolutionary Marxists should take regarding the situation in North Korea? The struggle of the masses is a revolutionary struggle to oust imperialism and the feudal-capitalist class which it is attempting to foster. Marxists support this struggle of the masses. But at the same time this movement is under the leadership of the Korean Communist Party, a political relative of the Chinese CP, whose policies are directly intermeshed and subservient to that of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. Stalinism by virtue of its position gains the leadership of the struggle on the part of the masses to consume their revolutionary energies up to the point of actual victory (which in the long run means defeat) so that it can maintain its hold of leadership on the masses for its own ends.

How can Marxists support a movement of the masses which is under the leadership of a social-reformist, counter-revolutionary Stalinist party?

Do they? The answer of the "Fourth International" Trotskyites is that, "The only possible revolutionary attitude is to participate in this movement of the colonial masses and to struggle within it against its exploitation by the Stalinist bureaucracy. But the primary condition for realizing this possibility is the UNCONDITIONAL DEFENSE OF THIS MOVEMENT AGAINST THE NATIVE FEUDAL-CAPITALISTS AND ABOVE ALL AGAINST IMPERIALISM!" (their own emphasis) These Trotskyites make an amalgam of the leadership and the masses with their UNCONDITIONAL support.

The policy of revolutionary Marxism is to carry the frontal struggle of the masses to the main enemy on the front. Our task however is to win the masses away from this betrayer leadership. Our policy is one of MARCHING SEPARATELY, BUT STRIKING TOGETHER. We would work for a united front of ALL CLASS FORCES against the invasion of the imperialists at the front. But at the same time our policy would be to organize THE WORKING MASSES into a separate column so that they could maintain their own arms, organizations, etc., and not subordinate them to the treacherous policies of the bourgeois-democrats and their social-reformist, Stalinist and Socialist allies. Our strategy would be to use those nationalist forces who would fight the imperialists; but at the same time keep our class force independent in the struggle with them so that the masses maintain their independent class strength. This is one part of the problem of building the revolutionary Marxian Party, and of achieving a social revolution within the area we hope to win and defend. This was the strategy of the Bolsheviks in relation to bourgeois-democratic Kerensky government and the armies of counter-revolution in 1917. It is the same strategy we advocated for Spain in relation to the People's Front government against Franco.

The nature of the general conditions of feudal-capitalist oppression throughout Asia ultimately combines the revolutionary struggles of the masses. The advance of imperialism on any front, as in Korea, threatens the life blood of the Chinese revolution. It is for this reason that the Chinese Red armies struggle in Korea, in Indo-China, give aid throughout South East Asia, the Philippines, invade Tibet. It may not be long before the civil war in India changes its religious forms and moves forward.

The strength of the revolutionary forces in Asia does not permit the Imperialists to rely on force alone. Already as they occupy the bombed workers homes they are preparing to build new ones. They will attempt to bribe the masses after their mass murder.

Revolutionary Marxists must work for an independent revolutionary Marxian Party in Korea. This force must arm itself on the basis of a revolutionary struggle to establish a democratic workers and peasants government, a genuine dictatorship of the proletariat. All foreign forces that stand in the way of this will have to be driven out of Korea and all other local governments.

Down with the Imperialist invasion of Korea!

Long Live the Independent struggle of the Korean peoples!

For a Social Revolution in Korea!

LETTER FROM ENGLAND BY J.T. SOCIALIST WORKERS LEAGUE

There is growing dissatisfaction with the Labor Government over such questions as "wage-freezing", unofficial strikes, increase cost of living, housing difficulties, etc., etc. Among the rank and file of almost all unions the demand for wage-increases has led to the T.U. Congress and the Labour Government to modifying its rigid attitude. Although in principle they have not departed from the basic policy of no wage advances, the pressure of the rank-and-file has led most union executives to abandon wage-increases for the lowest paid workers and the establishment of a national minimum wage for men of £ 5 per week. This tactical retreat by the trade union bureaucrats has been brought about by the pressure of the rank and file, but by conceding it they hope to stem the rising tide of opposition to their general line of class collaboration. On the other hand the Labour-government off sets any increases by the lifting of controls and the gradual removal of subsidies for essential commodities. The real purchasing power of the worker's wage therefore continues to drop. One of the biggest stabilizing factors in holding in check the class struggle is the absence of mass unemployment. The continued need to close the import-export gap by the end of the Marshall Plan in 1952-3 has brought about a relatively high level of employment. The increase in unemployment during the past five years has been comparatively slow and stands at about 350,000 compared with 1,500,000 in the period just before the war. The claim of the Labor Party that it has abolished mass unemployment and the introduction of such social services as the National Health Scheme is one of the biggest reasons for the continued support for the Labour Government. Comparatively, the most advanced sections of the working class are those working in industries and services which have been nationalised. Transport workers have been in the forefront of the struggle for some time. Unfortunately, the miners who used to hold the forefront of the struggle in the inter-war years are very quiet—the complete re-organization of the industry under nationalization, the continued demand for coal for home consumption and for export ensures a high level of employment, and the wage and other concessions made to the miners under nationalization has so far prevented the growth of any substantial militant class struggle. There are no immediate prospects of a let-up in production, in the non-nationalized, major sector of capitalist economy, the most disturbed section is general engineering, where the workers have made an attempt at a break-through. The demand for a £ a week increase led to a position where the various engineering unions balloted their members on the question of strike-action or the submission of the claim to arbitration. Unfortunately the position in the industry with relative full employment, the possibilities of making up earnings with overtime and by increased production bonuses, plus the continued support for the Labour Government and Labour Party and the absence of any co-ordinated militant opposition under a leadership, has led to an overwhelming vote in favour of the submission of the claim to arbitration. The dissatisfaction in the building industry over the continued curtailment of building operatives redundant to the industry have been absorbed by ot-

her industries. The light consumer industries such as clothing, furniture, etc., have been harder hit by increased consumer resistance to high prices and attempts to reduce prices at the expense of wages has led to one or two isolated struggles which may become more general. The textile industries, both cotton and wool, facing increased competition on the world market, are sharply resisting wage demands. But the unions in both spinning and weaving sections have complete bureaucratic control and any opposition is almost non-existent and has been for many years. It is the toughest nut to crack in the whole industrial sphere. Generally speaking, despite the world-wide hardening of prices, and growing competition, British capitalism is at the moment riding the crisis, and exports are still going up. Britain's nearest rivals (apart from the U.S.A.) such as Germany, Japan, France, etc., have still a long way to go before seriously challenging Britain's relatively favorable position. Despite all these difficulties, rumblings are growing. . . .

Yours fraternally,
Joe Thomas
For the S.W.L.

DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION DOWN U.S. IMPERIALISM DOWN STALINISM

NOVEMBER 7, 1917 33 years have passed since the establishment of the first workers state in the Soviet Union. Once again imperialism prepares its armies for a final onslaught to crush the Soviet Union. This is part and parcel of Imperialism's plans to defeat the civil wars and revolutions in Asia, brewing everywhere.

The Soviet Union and the struggles of the working class can only be defended by a struggle against Imperialism. Stalinism is a social-reformist force within the working class which has political power in the Soviet Union. It therefore is a counter-revolutionary agent of imperialism. Part and parcel of the struggle against imperialism is the struggle against Stalinism. FOR POLITICAL REVOLUTION IN THE SOVIET UNION.

But the opportunists and those who hurry to climb back on the imperialist band-wagon SEPARATE the relationship of Stalinism to imperialism. By finding "new" analysis of the nature of the Soviet Union and Stalinism they have a theoretical justification for their rotten SUPPORT TO THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM.

Stalinism cannot defend the Soviet Union. Only a new revolutionary Marxian party based on the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, in the Soviet Union, for the extension of November 7, 1917 throughout the world, and for the creation of a new MARXIAN INTERNATIONAL, can progress continue in the world and imperialist wars and depressions be eliminated.

DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION; FOR POLITICAL REVOLUTION IN THE SOVIET UNION

END THE IMPERIALIST WAR PLANS ! !

FOR FUTURE NOVEMBER 7, 1917's ! !

THE "JUNE PLENUM"

PART 5

A SUPPRESSED CHAPTER
FROM THE HISTORY OF TROTSKYISM

By HUGO OEHLER

To understand the real situation at the June Plenum, let us first consider a letter sent at that time, giving a first hand report.

New York
June 23 '35

Comrade G.:

I received your wire and am answering at once. The Plenum took one week, and has just concluded at six o'clock Saturday morning. That is the reason you did not hear from us sooner. This letter will merely give you some advance information. A full report will be sent later when we get some sleep and have time to go over the whole situation.

The results of the Plenum are an organizational and political stalemate. Only three issues of the long agenda were taken up, that is: the International question, the Socialist Party question and the internal question. All other questions such as trade union, NRA, Zack appeal, labor defense, etc., were not reached. So far as Cannon and Shachtman are concerned they do not care if we never reach a solution on these issues as well as the Negro question and others.

There were four forces represented at the Plenum:
the Cannonites with Cannon, Shachtman, Lowitt, Swaback, West and Ramuglia;
Musteites, represented by: Muste, Johnson, K. Lore, McKinney and Solander;
Weberites: Satir and Glotzer- Weber alternate;
Our force: Stamm, Basky and myself.

Minneapolis was not present, neither was Allard, nor the only two remaining right wingers (Budenzites) of the NC-- Truax and Brier.

The line up was such that if each of the four groups put in their own resolution and voted against all others, no resolution would pass. Therefore, a stalemate or a block was necessary to pass any motion.

The Cannon-Weber block enabled them to carry their International position. Muste's resolution and our resolution (which you already have) lost.

The four groups put in resolutions on the SP question so we arrived at a stalemate. Cannon's resolution (part) is enclosed because it clearly reveals in writing what we have always said--that they have an SP orientation. They even say they are going to reform the SP. Read the resolution very carefully. The definition of reform, they use in relation to the second international is the same definition we used in the past in relation to the CI when we were the Left Opposition.

Later on a motion on tactic in relation to the SP, the Weberites, Glotzer and Satir voted with Cannon and his motion carried. It is not a line, but it at least gives him a clear and free hand for the next months--without a party line. They changed their vote after agreeing to vote with us on a motion on tactics. This means they have voted, on tactic, for the Cannon SP orientation.

All motions on the Oslo Buro, the youth question were voted down. Then a compromise motion was presented and it was carried unanimously.

This convention saw the end of the Cannon Musto block. They broke and Musto worked with us on several points. Likewise, this convention saw the beginning of the end of the miserable straddle of the fence role of the Weberites. Their caucus will bust up unless they jump to a new position. The rank and file are deserting them. Even Papeun is ready to quit them.

On Organization. Musto brought it out clearly that Cannon intended to throw us out at this Plenum and that the Zack expulsion was planned by Cannon as the first step in this direction in order that he could put through his SP orientation in a cloud of confusion and expulsions. The Cannonites endeavored to have the Plenum reaffirm the Pittsburgh decision against us. Our vote with the vote of the Musto forces and the Weber forces voted this down. So the second Plenum rescinded the action of the first Plenum.

Likewise the forces, in an abstract motion censured the editors of our publication. Another blow at the Cannonites.

All charges pending against comrades were dropped. By a vote of these three forces.

The above three victories are directly in favor of our position. On these points we were the driving forces.

Stamm was censured by the control commission because Cannon's word was as good as a socialist's word on certain charges.

Our motion for a convention within three months was lost.

Cannon openly announced he is going out into the party and carry on a factional fight against us to the end. That we cannot exist side by side together.

Of course, Cannon controls the press and the PC so he can carry on his war against us through legal channels.

Zack's appeal goes over to the next Plenum or the Convention if we can hold one. We are going to appeal to the membership as per the constitution for the convention.

The fight in the coming period will primarily be between Cannon's forces and our forces. Musto and Weber will have to cave in to one or the other main positions. We were the two poles at this Plenum and which side these comrades supported enabled that group to carry. This material voted half the time with us and half the time with Cannon. However, the Musto force was clearer politically than the Weber force. They are the key to the saving of the party.

Cannon's big slogan against us will be the Trotskyites vs the Anti-Trotskyites. We can easily smash him on this. He will use this as a smoke screen for his SP orientation. The political axis of the fight will revolve around the SP orientation.

We gained more at the Plenum than Cannon. We now have an open road between now and the convention which we must drive toward. We will write you a detail report on the whole struggle.

Hoping this advance information is satisfactory, I am

as ever,

Hugo

This letter written on the heels of the event, makes clear as Cannon's "History" published in 1944 does not, that there were four groups. Not a bloc as Cannon claims. It makes clear that the Pittsburgh bloc of Cannon and Musto ended.

but it also made clear that as yet there was no new bloc. The letter also makes clear, as history has since proved, that whichever way the Muste and Weber forces would go--so would go the party. Sad to say, Muste and Weber went to Cannon--and that meant liquidation. If they had been big enough, or if we had been big enough to get together, the party could have been saved. Cynics may laugh. But we have much more to say, and much more evidence to show, to prove that the saving of the Workers Party of 1935 from the liquidationist drive of Cannon-Shachtman & Company, would have meant much to the Spanish Revolution, to the movement for a Marxian Fourth International, to the opposition to the imperialist war, and to successful social revolution if--if a small group of comrades could have risen to the occasion and charted the correct road at the CORRECT MOMENT--as Lenin did in Russia.

THE LEFT WING WARNS THE PARTY

Cannon pretends that the big question at the June Plenum was to support his forces against the "sectarians" who were trying to split the party. The following document issued by left wing comrades right after the plenum proves differently.

The Second Plenum of the Workers Party which met in New York ended in a stalemate, unable to resolve the important questions confronting the party and the class. Out of an eleven point agenda, the plenum which lasted a week, was able to consider only three points: some aspects of the international question; the SP question and the internal question. The Plenum concluded with a stalemate on the SP and internal questions.

The majority of the questions which were not considered at the Plenum, as well as the SP question were all before the Political Committee prior to the first Plenum held in Pittsburgh. These issues were referred to the Pittsburgh Plenum by the PC. They were not solved there and were referred back to the PC. The PC failed even to consider them and referred them to the Second Plenum. And now the Second Plenum has adjourned without giving answers to these burning questions.

The most important of these issues hanging over the party is the SP orientation of the Cannon-Shachtman group (see their Plenum resolutions on the SP) not only its application here in the United States, but also its international aspect - the new turn of the ICL, commonly known as the French turn, the liquidation of the section of the ICL into parties of the Second International (France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Poland, England, etc.).

In its international aspect this issue has hung like a cloud over the party since its very birth because of the close relations of our party with the ICL. In its U.S. aspect it became a party problem before the party was two months old through the West resolution on the S.P. presented to the PC by West on January 28. Now, after six months, the whole question is a life and death matter for the Workers Party. Twice the National Committee has been unable to resolve the problem. Therefore the membership must resolve it.

The only solution remaining is a convention of the party. Therefore, we appeal to the membership for a special convention of the Workers Party.

The Cannon-Shachtman group stand for a third Plenum in September as the "solution" and a convention in six months. In reality they are calling for a solution by the well known method of -- "possession is nine-tenths of the law." The Cannon-Shachtman group is a minority in the party. But it has a

decisive control of the party apparatus, through its control of the press, the New International and the New Militant, and by having the largest single group in the PC. With this apparatus they will continue in the next six months as they did in the first six months to use the apparatus for their factional ends, to smuggle their line into the party in contravention of the Declaration of Principles and to fight to expel comrades who oppose them. It was clearly revealed at the New York Plenum that they had planned a wholesale expulsion drive beginning with Zack, Basky, Ochler, Stamm and others around them in order to clear the road for their SP orientation. On the eve of the Plenum comrades in many branches were put under charges and two had already been expelled. They planned to eliminate those comrades who were consistent opponents of the new turn of the ICL, in order to break the backbone of all the left forces in the W.P. and thereby make it easier for them to apply this turn in the U.S.

The S.P. orientation of these comrades involves ultimately the liquidation of the Workers Party into the Socialist Party, after the old guard in the S.P. is driven out, or the liquidation of the Workers Party into a new party on a contrist programmatic basis. But the immediate and deadly effects of this orientation upon the party results in tailendism to the SP, in the liquidation of the external and internal struggle against Social-Democracy and other forces of centrism and reformism, has checked the flow of recruits to the party and has strengthened the position of the Socialist forces against the Workers Party and the hand of the right in the S.P. against left elements. On this question we are prepared to present ample proof, concrete motions and acts of the Cannon-Shachtman group.

The Cannon faction proposes a convention in six months. We think the Party cannot wait six months. The internal struggle is sharpening. Factions are crystallizing. Party activity is being seriously affected. Recruiting is being affected. Possibilities of winning forces from the SP are being jeopardized. If we wait six months and hold a six months discussion we will wear out and disgust and demoralize the membership, stagnate the Party, lose opportunities for work in the class struggle, repel workers now moving in our direction.

A convention in three months will provide for a full Party discussion, create the possibility for a solution of the problems we confront, crystallize a Party line as the basis for Party work in the late fall and winter.

Since the solution to this and many other burning questions has not been found within the PC and the two Plenums of the N.C., the next essential step is a convention of the Party. The New York Plenum voted down our demand for a convention in three months. Therefore, we take the next step, in accordance with the Constitution and appeal to the branches to call a convention. By this time you have the first issue of the Internal Bulletin, which presented the motions and resolutions of the Plenum. You therefore have ample material on which to decide the question before you - the calling of a special convention of the party. If branches equal to 50% of the membership demand a convention it is obligatory to call it.

We ask all branches to vote for a special convention of the Workers Party to be held in the fall of the year, three months after the PC received demands from 50% of the membership for a convention. Call a special meeting at once and air mail your demand for a special convention.

Comradely,
Basky, Ochler, Stamm

(To be Continued)

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